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SOME TALES FROM BAHAMA FOLK-LORE.¹

IN an earlier paper,² in presenting some of these tales, I attempted to draw a picture of the people and their environment, of Green Turtle Cay, one of the more isolated of the Bahama Islands. It was my purpose that, with this picture in mind, the reader might gain a more philosophical idea of the folk-lore; as indeed, conversely, a consideration of the folk-lore of any race gives to a large extent an index of the intelligence and the environment of that race.

It is under the sunny skies of the sub-tropics, where an even-tempered atmosphere invites man to be lazy, and the struggle for existence can always be postponed for a day, that there is a good opportunity for cultivating story-telling. Under these conditions, in a community largely cut off from the rush of human affairs, with few books and newspapers, where every animal and tree and jutting headland is a matter of importance, the stories are strongly localized, and become built into a folk-lore at once peculiar and interesting. Such a community is Green Turtle Cay. The inhabitants, as to color, are about evenly divided; the white people being rather stupid and narrow-minded, albeit the negroes are bright and interesting.

For the most part the negro children are the medium of perpetuation of the folk-lore. The conventional negro dialect is considerably modified by an intermixture of cockney and of correct English pronunciations. The same tale narrated by different individuals, or by the same individual at different times, will vary not alone in the pronunciation of certain words, but also in unimportant details of the plot.

From these causes, the phraseology of the stories, which I attempted to write phonetically at the time of hearing, is often found inconsistent. These tales are divided by the narrators into "old stories" and "fairy stories," the former including for the most part the folk-lore proper. The fairy stories have generally suffered modification in their translation into Bahama lore, and in some cases it is very difficult to detect the original.

The "old stories" have to do in the main with animals, whereas in the fairy tales the characters are generally human beings. The "Brer" of Uncle Remus,³ or the "Buh" of Charles C. Jones,⁴ is

¹ Read at the Annual Meeting of the American Folk-Lore Society, November 29, 1890.

² "Folk-Lore of the Bahama Negroes:" *The American Journal of Psychology*, vol. ii. No. 4, August, 1889.

³ *Uncle Remus, His Songs and His Sayings*. The Folk-Lore of the Old Plantation. Joel Chandler Harris. New York, 1881.

⁴ *Negro Myths from the Georgia Coast*. Charles C. Jones, Jr., LL. D. Boston, 1888.

among the Bahama negroes contracted to simply B', which connected with the name of the animal personifies it. The habit of mixing together the parts of several tales in order to make one, as is seen in some of the fairy stories, gives us an odd and generally more or less obscure resultant tale.

Professor Crane,¹ in his admirable review of "Uncle Remus," gives a number of parallel stories from the folk-lore of other races, especially comparing the tales of the Southern negroes with those of the natives of South America, given by Smith ("Brazil, the Amazons, and the Coast," New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1879), and by Hart ("Amazonian Tortoise Myths," Rio de Janeiro, 1875). Professor Crane shows conclusively the negro origin of the Indian tales, and points out their wide diffusion.

OLD STORIES.

DE MAN AN' DE DOG.

*Once it vvas a time, a very good time,
De monkey chewed tobacco an' 'e spit vwhite lime.*²

Now dis day it vvas one man. 'E had one sour-sop³ tree; 'e did n't use to let no people know. He wife an' 'e children could hardly get anything to heat. Every mornin' de man use t' go from his house to dat tree to heat his breakfast.

Now de woman say, "Wonde' whey my husban' does git hevry t'ing to heat." She get one bag o' hashes. She say, "My husban', come 'ere an' let me fix your shirt!" Den she tied de bag hashes on he back. Vw'en de man vvas goin' to dat tree de hashes did drop hout. 'E vwent to his sour-sop tree; 'e heat as much 's 'e vwan', den 'e come away. Vw'en 'e come home de vwoman say, "My husban', come 'ere; le' me fix your shirt again." Den she take de bag hashes off 'im.

Hafter dat de vwoman vwent dere to de sour-sop tree; she pull hevry one clean; only leave one. De man say, "My soul! somebody been here, take hall my sour-sop!" De man climb up in de tree. 'E take one stick; 'e reach up to dat limb an' try to get 'e sour-sop down, an' 'e could n't get it.

'E see B'Sheep; 'e say, "B'Sheep, get dis sour-sop fur me; I'll give you half." B'Sheep say, "No, I vwan' hall!"

'E see B'Tiger. De man say, "B'Tiger, get dis sour-sop fur me; I'll give you half." B'Tiger say, "No, I vwan' hall!"

¹ "Plantation Folk-Lore," Professor T. F. Crane, *The Popular Science Monthly*, vol. xviii. p. 824.

² This verse always introduces an "old story," and sometimes, in their fondness for the doggerel, the negroes thus begin a fairy story.

³ A species of *Anona*, the *A. muricata*.

'E see B'Lion. 'E say, "B'Lion, git dis sour-sop fur me; I'll give you half." B'Lion say, "No, I vwan' hall!" Den he see B'Dog; 'e say, "B'Dog!" "B'Dog say, "*Hey!*" 'E say, "Get dis sour-sop fur me; I give you half." B'Dog say, "*Hall* right!" B'Dog ketch it. Soon 's 'e git 'im, *so*, 'e put hoff a running, 'im an' de dog. De dog fin' de man vwas comin' on 'im so, 'e burry right up in de sand.

Now de dog jus' leave 'e two heyes out; vw'en 'e get dere de man say, "Ho my! look at de san' got heyes." De man vwen', tell de people de san' got heyes. 'E gone call hall de people. Vw'en hall on 'em come now, dey look; dey say, "Ho yes, de san' got heyes fur truth!" Vw'en de man dig; vw'en 'e foun' hout vwas dat same dog, 'e *ketch* 'im; 'e squeeze 'im dead.

*E bo ban, my story 's en';
If you don't believe my story 's true,
Hax my captain an' my crew.*¹

B'LOGGERHEAD,² B'DOG, AN' B'RABBY.

Once it vwas a time, etc.

Now dis day B'Loggerhead an' B'Dog could n't find nothing to heat. B'Loggerhead say, "B'Dog, you like fish?" B'Dog say, "Yes!" B'Dog say, "B'Loggerhead, you like Conch?"³ B'Loggerhead say, "Yes."

Now dey *gone*; dey gone to B'Rabby's *craw*.⁴ Plenty conchs an' fish vwas dere. So B'Loggerhead *pitch*⁵ right inside; gone right flat to bottom.

W'en B'Dog *pitch*, 'e *float*. 'E *pitch* again; *float!* *Pitch* again; *float!* B'Dog say, "I cahn' get no fish; I goan' tell B'Rabby!" B'Dog *gone*.

B'Rabby vwas vay up on de hill lookin' at 'em. B'Dog say, "Hey, B'Rabby! B'Loggerhead down dere eatin' all your conchs!" B'Rabby ketch B'Dog; vw'en 'e dash 'im down 'e kill 'im. 'E *gone*; 'e taught 'e do B'Loggerhead like 'e do B'Dog. Vw'en 'e fire de stick at B'Loggerhead, *so*, B'Loggerhead jump right out de *craw*. 'E take one little boat; 'e vwent chasin' B'Loggerhead. Vw'en B'Loggerhead *pitch* at B'Rabby, *so*, it nearly turn de boat over. *Good!* B'Rabby say, "You know you goin' sink me." Vw'en B'Loggerhead *pitch* at B'Rabby, *so*, 'e knock de boat right over. B'Rabby say, "O, damn! I gone!"

E bo ban, etc.

¹ The ordinary conclusion of a tale.

² Conch, a common mollusk.

⁵ Dive.

² A common species of turtle.

⁴ Live-box for fish.

B'RABBY AN' B'TAR-BABY.¹*Once it vvas a time, etc.*

So dis day B'Rabby, B'Booky, B'Tiger, B'Lizard, B'Helephant, B'Goat, B'Sheep, B'Rat, B'Cricket; all o' de creatures, all kind, — so now dey say, "B'Rabby, you goin' help dig vwell?" B'Rabby say, "No!" Dey say, "Vw'en you vwan' vwater, how you goin' manage?" 'E say, "Get it an' drink it." Dey say, "B'Rabby, you goin' help cut fiel?" B'Rabby say, "No!" Dey say, "Vw'en you 'r hungry, how you goin' manage?" "Get it an' eat it." So all on 'em gone to work. Dey vwen'; dey dig vwell first. Nex' dey cut fiel'.

Now dis day B'Rabby *come*. Dey leave B'Lizard home to min' de vwell. So now B'Rabby say, "B'Lizard, you vwant to see who can make de mostest noise in de trash?" B'Lizard say, "Yes!" B'Rabby say, "You go in dat big heap o' trash dere an' I go in dat over dere (B'Rabby did vwant to get his vwater now!). B'Lizard *gone* in de trash; 'e kick up. Vw'ile 'e vvas makin' noise in de trash, B'Rabby dip 'e bucket full o' vwater. 'E *gone*!

So now vw'en B'Helephant come, an' hall de hother animals come out de fiel', B'Helephant say, "B'Lizard, you goin' let B'Rabby come here to-day an' take dat vwater?" B'Lizard say, "I could n't help it!" 'E say, "E tell me to go in de trash to see who could make the mostest noise." Now de nex' day dey leave B'Booky home to min' de vwell. Now B'Rabby *come*. 'E say, "B'Booky, you vwan' to see who can run de fastes'?" B'Booky say, "Yes." 'E say, "You go dat side, an' le' me go dis side." *Good!* B'Booky break off; 'e gone a runnin'. Soon as B'Booky git out o' sight B'Rabby dip 'e bucket; 'e *gone*.

So now vw'en B'Helephan' an' em come dey say, "B'Booky, you let B'Rabby come 'ere again to-day and take our vwater?" 'E say, "'E tell me who could run de fastes', an' soon 's I git a little vays 'e take de vwater an' gone. So B'Helephan' say, "I know how to ketch him!"

Dey *gone*; hall on 'em in de pine yard. Dey make one big tar-

¹ This tale presents an interesting variant of "The Wonderful Tar-Baby Story," and of "How Mr. Rabbit was too sharp for Mr. Fox," by Harris; and of "Buh Rabbit an de Tar Baby," by Jones. Crane (*l. c.*) finds in the *South-African Folk-Lore Journal* an interesting parallel to this story. "A number of animals build a dam to hold water, and the jackal comes and muddies the water. A baboon is set to guard the dam, but the jackal easily outwits him. Then the tortoise offers to capture the jackal, and proposes 'that a thick coating of *bijenwerk* (a kind of sticky, black substance found on beehives) should be spread all over him, and that he should go and stand at the entrance of the dam, on the water-level, so that the jackal might tread on him, and stick fast.' The jackal is caught, but, with his customary craft, escapes."

baby. Dey stick 'im up to de vwell. B'Rabby *come*. 'E say, "Hun! dey leave my dear home to min' de vwell to-day." B'Rabby say, "Come, my dear, le' me kiss you!" Soon as 'e kiss 'er 'e lip stick fas'. B'Rabby say, "Min' you better le' go;" 'e say, "You see dis biggy, biggy han' here;" 'e say, "'f I slap you wid dat I kill you." Now vw'en B'Rabby fire, *so*, 'e han' stick. B'Rabby say, "Min' you better le' go me;" 'e say, "You see dis biggy, biggy han' here; 'f I slap you wid dat I kill you." Soon as B'Rabby slap wid de hudder han', *so*, 'e stick. B'Rabby say, "You see dis biggy, biggy foot here: my pa say, 'f I kick anybody wid my biggy, biggy foot I kill 'em." Soon as 'e fire his foot, *so*, it stick. B'Rabby say, "Min' you better le' go me." *Good!* soon as 'e fire his foot, *so*, it stick. Now B'Rabby jus' vwas hangin'; hangin' on de Tar-baby.

B'Booky come runnin' out firs'. 'E say, "Ha! vwe got 'im to-day! vwe got 'im to-day!" 'E gone back to de fiel'; 'e tell B'Helephan'; 'e say, "Ha! B'Elephan", vwe got 'im to-day!" Vw'en all on 'em gone out now dey ketch B'Rabby. Now dey did vwan' to kill B'Rabby; dey did n' know whey to t'row 'im. B'Rabby say, "'f you t'row me in de sea" (you know 'f dey had t'row B'Rabby in de sea, dey'd a kill 'im), — B'Rabby say, "'f you t'row me in de sea you won' hurt me a bit." B'Rabby say, "'f you t'row me in de fine grass, you kill me an' all my family." Dey take B'Rabby. Dey t'row 'im in de fine grass. B'Rabby *jump* up; 'e put off a runnin'. So now B'Rabby say, "Hey! ketch me 'f you could." All on 'em gone now.

Now dis day dey vwas all sittin' down heatin'. Dey had one big house; de house vwas full o' hall kin' o' hanimals. B'Rabby *gone*; 'e git hup on top de house; 'e make one big hole in de roof o' de house. B'Rabby sing hout, "Now, John Fire, go hout!" B'Rabby let go a barrel o' mud; let it run right down inside de house. Vw'en 'e let go de barrel o' mud, *so*, every one on 'em take to de bush, right vwil'; gone right hover in de bush. B'Rabby make all on 'em vwent vwil', till dis day you see hall de hanimals vwil'.

E bo ban, etc.

B'BIG-HEAD, B'BIG-GUT, AN' B'TIN-LEG.

Once it vwas a time, etc.

Dis day it vwas B'Big-head, B'Big-gut, an' B'Tin-leg. Dey ain't had no pa. Dey ma vwas dead. Dey only had four dough boys. So now B'Big-head say, "Now, brothers, let's go look for water." Now dey share o' dough boys; dey all three, each had little can. Dey each put dough boys in de can, an' dey vwent to look for water now. Dey walk 'til dey come to one coco'nut tree; now B'Big-gut

say, "You go, B'Big-head." B'Big-head say, "I can't go;" 'e say, "If I go, soon as I look down, my head so big I fall down!" Den 'e say to B'Big-gut, 'e go. B'Big-gut say, "My gut so big if I go I fall down!" Now B'Tin-leg say, "I'll go!" Now all on 'em had de dough boys down on de ground. Now B'Tin-leg vwas goin', a clim'-in' up de tree. Vw'en B'Tin-leg look down an' see B'Big-gut brush-in' de flies off his dough boy, B'Tin-leg t'ought B'Big-gut vwas eatin' it. 'E jes' kill himself on de coco'nut tree; kickin' an' flingin', jes' so. B'Big-gut laugh so much till 'e bust his gut.

Den it only leave B'Big-head, one now. Now B'Bighead vwen' to look for water. B'Big-head come to one well. 'E vwas drinkin' water. B'Heagle come dere, an' de Heagle did want water an' B'Big-head would n't let him get none. Den him an' de Heagle had a fight. De Heagle kick him. When de Heagle went an' kick him B'Big-head ketch his foot. After B'Big-head ketch his foot, den 'e could n' hold it, an' de Heagle shake 'im all to pieces.

E bo ban, my story's end, etc.

B'RABBY HAD A MOTHER.¹

Once it vwas a time, etc.

B'Rabby had a mother; father vwas dead; de times vwas very hard; did n' know vwat to do for a livin'. B'Rabby said to 'is mother, "You lay down on de bed an' preten' dat you are dead." So B'Rabby cried out, "Poor B'Rabby got no mother!" Hax 'im, "Where was his mother?" 'E said, "She is dead" (doing dat to get food). 'E said, "Don't hax me nothin', but go in de room an' see for yourself." Vw'en B'Rabbies started to go in de room to see de dead mother, 'e stood behind de door with a club in his hans, an' after de room got full 'e jumped inside vwith 'is club an' lock de door. 'E began to knock down B'Rabbies. Some 'e kill; some 'e cripple, an' de balance get clear. Him an' his mother had a plenty of meat to heat.

Hafter dat, by him servin' such a dirty trick dey despised him, would not have nothing no more to do with him, an' B'Rabby said, "I did n' ker about it; had meat to heat an' vwater to drink."

E bo ban, my story's end, etc.

B'MAN, B'WOMAN, AN' B'MONKEYS.

Once it vwas a time, etc.

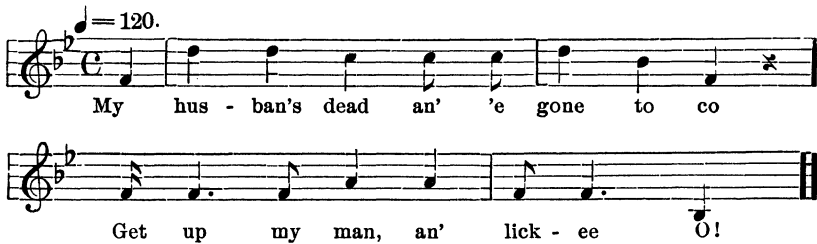
Now dis day, it vwas a poor man; 'e did n' have no money. Now

¹ This tale and the following are founded upon the same idea; that of certain animals, in order to obtain food, enticing other animals to their destruction. Similar stories are found in the folk-lore of our Southern negroes, and indeed in that of most races.

'e did vwan' fix a plan to get some money. De vwoman tell de man to make believe like 'e vwas dead. She dress de man an' lay 'im out in de house. De vwoman vw'en she call all dese monkeys, tell 'em to come help 'er to sing ; say her husband is dead.

Now whole lot o' monkeys come, one-tail monkey, two-tail, tree, four, five, six, seven, eight, an' nine-tail monkey. Now dis big nine-tail monkey, 'e vwould n' come in ; 'e jus' stan' at de door.

Now de vwoman pitch de song :



Vw'en de man get up, *so*, 'e kill every one besides two ; dat big monkey vwas standin' to de door vwent outside ; one little t'ree-tail monkey stay up on de roof o' de house. Vw'en 'e come down on de vwoman, *so*, 'e sink 'er right t'r'u' de floor.

E bo ban, my story's end, etc.

B'RABBY, B'BOOKY, AN' B'COW.¹

Once it vwas a time, etc.

Now dis day it vwas B'Rabby an' B'Booky. It vwas blowin' ; dey did n' have nuthin' to heat ; dey could n' ketch no fish. Dey vwas trabblin' along to see if dey could n' find something to heat. An' now vw'en B'Rabby look 'e see one big cow ; 'e gone to de cow. Den 'e take his hand an' spank on de cow bottom. 'E say, "Hopen, Kabendye, hopen !" W'en de cow bottom open B'Rabby jump in vwid his knife an' his pan. 'E cut his pan full o' meat. B'Rabby say, "Hopen, Kabendye, hopen !" and de cow bottom hopen an' B'Rabby jump out.

¹ Dr. Franz Boas has found this tale, in its essential ideas, in the folk-lore of the Vancouver Island Indians, and even more widely distributed. It is also much the same story as "The Sad Fate of Mr. Fox," by Harris, and the name of the cow, "Bookay," in that tale, may be the original of B'Booky here, or *vice versa*. In Bahama stories, however, B'Booky is one of the important heroes, appearing in a number of tales. It is possible that the term may have originated from the French-speaking negroes of Louisiana, one of whose heroes is *le bouc*, the male goat. Crane gives from Bleek a story in which the Elephant swallows the Tortoise, in order to kill him. But the Tortoise "tore off his liver, heart, and kidneys," and thus killed the Elephant, then "came out of his dead body and went wherever it liked."

Good! Now B'Rabby vvas goin' home; his pan full o' meat. B'Booky see B'Rabby; say, "B'Rabby, whey you get all dat meat?" B'Booky say, "f you don' tell me whey you get all dat meat I goin' tell!" B'Rabby say, "Go right down dere whey you see one big cow." B'Booky say, "Hall right!" B'Rabby say, "Vw'en you git dere you must take your han' an' spank hard on de cow bottom an' say, "Hopen, Kabendye, hopen!" B'Rabby say, "Soon as dey hopen you must jump hin." Den 'e say, "You see one big t'ing inside dere; you must n' cut dat!" B'Rabby say, "Mind, f you cut dat de cow goin' to fall down dead." B'Booky gone. Vw'en 'e got dere 'e take his hand; 'e spank on de cow bottom an' 'e say, "Hopen, Kabendye, hopen." Den 'e jump hin. B'Booky cut, 'e *cut*, 'e *cut* his hand full! B'Booky wan' satisfied; 'e went an' 'e cut de cow heart; de cow fall down; *Bran*', 'e dead! Den B'Booky say, "Hopen, Kabendye, hopen!" After 'e foun' de cow bottom could n' hopen, 'e vwen' inside de cow mouth. Nex' mornin', vw'en de people come to feed 'im, dey found de cow dead.

Now dey begin to clean de cow; skin 'im. After dey done clean 'im dey cut 'im hopen; dey take hout hall his guts. B'Booky vvas inside de maw; swell up. De vwoman say, "Cut dat big t'ing open. See what in dere!" After dat dey vwent to cut it open; den B'Booky jump 'way yonder. Dey did n' see 'im. B'Booky say, "See what you t'row on me. Ma jus' sent me down here to buy fresh beef, den you go t'row all dis nasty stuff on me!" De people say, "Hush, don' cry, we give you half o' de cow!" B'Booky say, "I don' want no half!" 'E say, "I goin' to carry you to jail!" Den de man say, "No, B'Booky, we give you half o' de cow!" De man goin' t'row anudder stinkin' pan o' water an' blood hout. B'Booky jump 'way yonder. De man t'row it on B'Booky. Den B'Booky say, "Now I ain' goin' to stop; I goin' carry you right to de jail!" De man say, "Hush, B'Booky, don' cry, I goin' give you half o' de cow!" Anyhow, dey give B'Booky half o' de cow. B'Booky take it on his shoulder; 'e gone.

Vw'en 'e look 'e see B'Rabby. B'Rabby say, "Hey, whey you get all o' dat meat?" B'Booky say, "I went down dere; I cut dat big, big t'ing in de cow, an' de cow fall down dead." Den 'e say, "W'en de people come in de mornin' to kill de cow," 'e say, "I was inside de cow; vw'en dey cut dat big t'ing I jump 'way yonder; I say, 'See what you t'row 'pon me!' 'e say, "Den dey give me half o' de cow." B'Rabby say, "Dat 's de way to do!"

E bo ban, my story's end, etc.

Charles L. Edwards.

(To be continued.)